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## "INTEGER VITAE" <sup>1</sup>

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Of all the odes of Horace there is none that can vie with "Integer vitae" in vogue and popularity; indeed there is no other ode of Horace which can be said to have vogue or popularity at all outside of the small company of those who habitually read the poet in his own language. It would be interesting to know whether antiquity bestowed the same favor upon this gem of song as it has enjoyed in modern times, but our record begins only with the later Middle Ages, in which it had become a familiar folk and student song. Indeed, it is only as a college song, and through the medium of Flemming's severe melody, that it still survives with us, and its survival in this sphere shows signs of decay, of disappearance (together with song in general) from the consciousness of the student body generally, and of restriction to the members of the musical organizations—who alas! are not always good Latinists, and might hesitate to declare in English the nature of that *integritas vitae* which they proclaim so earnestly. A shadowy immortality, but of a kind which should please the poet, whose verses were meant for song. Its accentual rhythm in violent perversion of the delicate Sapphics would perhaps pain him, and the stately, almost liturgical, quality of Flemming's melody would doubtless seem a shade too serious. Too serious, in fact, it is for any conception of the poem, and many shades too serious if in reality it is a playful bit of burlesque or parody, as the German and American interpreters of the last twenty-five years have decreed. My purpose is briefly to review the interpretation of this poem, and to suggest some considerations which may be of service in reaching a conclusion concerning the poet's real meaning and intention.

The explanation of the poem as humorous, as parody on a motif of the erotic elegy has with us become the current one. All the more recent American editions take it in this vein—Smith, Shorey

<sup>1</sup> An address before the New England Classical Association, April 2, 1910.

(with some restrictions), Moore, and Bennett. For the wide acceptance of this view Kiessling is doubtless chiefly responsible, and I had always supposed until recently that he was the originator of it. Kiessling's *Odes* appeared first in 1884, and before that time no suggestion, I think, of such an interpretation will be found in any American or English edition. But I noted first that Hirschfelder (in an excursus to the fourth edition of Orelli) in 1883 appealed to a comment of Porphyrio in support of a humorous conception of the poem, and then, exploring the matter further, I discovered a goodly number of predecessors, who either adopt this point of view or at least refer to it: Lehrs in 1878, Schütz in 1874, Keller in 1870, Wahrschauer in 1868, Lübker in 1841, and so finally back to a certain Müllner, whom Düntzer (*Kritik u. Erklärung*) names as the author of this suggestion. This brings us back to the period of Hofman-Peerlkamp, whose star had just risen and was beginning to exercise that baleful influence, especially upon the German study of Horace and other Latin poets, which extended down to Kiessling's time and of which isolated manifestations still survive. Though Peerlkamp in his edition makes no allusion to the interpretation of this ode as a whole, yet he is, I venture to say, the *fons et origo* (though innocently) of the whole conception of it as burlesque or parody. In just what way I shall explain presently. But while upon this point I should add, of course, an item to which Hirschfelder and Kiessling point as conclusive, the fact that Porphyrio drops a hint that the extravagant portrayal of the wolf may be meant playfully. But the comment of Porphyrio in reality has played no rôle at all in suggesting or establishing the interpretation in question. It has proceeded rather (so far as I can discern from the imperfect record of Horatian studies available to me), entirely from the fact of Peerlkamp's rejection of the fourth stanza. The steps have been these: Peerlkamp rejected the description of the wolf, *quale portentum*, on the ground of extravagant juxtaposition of geographical allusions; this led Lübker (and perhaps others before him) to interpret more definitely the stanza as extravagant and to defend it. "The poet's subjective feeling of security and trust leads his imagination to a palpable exaggeration, the marks of which should not, however, be obliterated." The next thing was to proceed a step further and characterize the description

not merely as an extravagant exaggeration but as a playful extravaganza—a point of view which carried with it all the rest of the poem,<sup>1</sup> converting the earnestness of the opening words into mock-seriousness, and the conclusion into sheer flippancy. Upon this general interpretation it has been possible then to play many variations; as for instance, with Keller, to say that Horace starts with the apparently serious enunciation of a Stoic sentiment in the first stanza, which he then proceeds to turn into merriment by a frivolous illustration; or with Kiessling to urge that the whole treatment is parody and persiflage of a trite elegiac theme.<sup>2</sup> The vagaries of the ὀβελίζοντες and χαριζόντες it is not worth while to remember nor to record, but by way of illustration I may note that a certain Wahrschauer saved the dignity of the remainder of the ode by bold excision of the offending member, eliminating the wolf completely (and the poet in the Sabine forest as well) by rejecting stanzas 3 and 4; and finally, that no less a scholar than Lehrs entertained himself with the fancy that Horace wrote the three first stanzas as they are, and that to them his waggish friend Fuscus appended the remainder as a burlesque sequel.

Now in these remarks I have no thought nor desire to discredit the interpretation in question (it must stand or fall upon its own merits), but only to trace its origin and history so far as I have been able to discern it. I will only add that it will perhaps be something of a grief to the sober Horatian of to-day to realize that the current interpretation of a favorite ode, even if it be the correct one, owes its origin to so mad a period of criticism as that which bears the mark of Hofman-Peerlkamp.

But now, proceeding from the history of this view to the view itself, let us note some circumstances which have given support to the interpretation which we may thus designate as the current one. First of all is the circumstance that it is dedicated to Aristius Fuscus, who is

<sup>1</sup> Wahrschauer (in *Zeitschr. f. Gymn.*, 1868, p. 495) refers to those who hold "dass der Dichter mit der hyperbolischen Haltung des Gedichtes wohl eher eine komische als eine ernste Wirkung hat erzielen wollen." I have not been able to determine to whom specifically he makes allusion.

<sup>2</sup> Most recently Sorof (Easter Programme of the Gymnasium at Wandsbek, 1906) finds our poem a playful profession of Epicurean faith and demonstration of its efficacy. I am indebted to Professor Sorof for a copy of his paper, and I would express a courteous regret that I cannot repay his kindness with concurrence in his view.

known to us from *Serm.* i. 9 as a waggish fellow who got his own fun out of Horace's entanglement with the bore and left him under the knife. But for the waggishness of Aristius this is the only characterization available, and while it is something, it is not much. He is addressed also in *Epp.* i. 10, which reveals him as an intimate friend whom Horace can approach with terms of playful affection. But in the serious argument of the letter which follows, there is no trace of light banter to which the theme might easily have lent itself. This is not to say much, only that Horace could address him in a tone of serious exhortation and admonition. But more significant has been the fact that certain difficulties have been felt in the serious interpretation of this ode which disappear if its argument is in reality not serious. The matter has been touched upon by many critics and commentators. But for illustration I will choose the remarks of Munro, that sanest of English Latinists, upon the quality of whose poetical taste and judgment the suspicion of incompetence, which often haunts us in the case of the German commentator, cannot rest. He says (in his *Criticisms and Elucidations of Catullus*, p. 237): "This ode is certainly not in my judgment one of Horace's best. I see no inward bond of connexion between the four first most prosaic stanzas one with the other nor between them and the last two: and the wolf, more terrible than any lion or wild boar, savors more of nervousness than of inspiration." In somewhat the same vein is Lucian Müller's comment (*Odes*, p. 161): "It would have been more natural if Horace had designated his love of Lalage as the reason for his wonderful deliverance, and if the introduction of the poem had been similar in thought to the verses of Propertius (iii. 16, 37):

quisquis amator erit, Scythicis licet ambulet oris  
nemo adeo ut noceat barbarus esse volet."

Here, then, in reality is the crux of the whole matter: wherein does the poet's song of Lalage, betraying his love, and his assurance of continued devotion under any stress of outward pain or suffering, reveal him as *integer vitae scelerisque purus*? Now if these words do in fact mean in a universal ethical sense "the man of uprightness and stainless integrity," comparable to *iustum et tenacem propositi virum*, we must concede that Horace has failed to indicate a suitable connection between the introductory generalization and the example

with which he proceeds to illustrate it. In that case it will perhaps be best to accept the words as heroic in tone, but betrayed as mock heroic in reality by the playful, even frivolous, illustration with which the generalization is demonstrated.

But the conclusion to which I am leading you will perhaps already surmise. It is, namely, to challenge the accepted interpretation of the words *integer vitae scelerisque purus* themselves, and to inquire whether they do not in fact bear a meaning better suited to the illustration and the assurance which follow. Let us free ourselves for a moment from the detailed words of our text and ask merely as a matter of abstract logical congruity, what characterization *should* precede the illustration of deliverance and the final assurance of continued devotion, *dulce ridentem Lalagen amabo*. You will grant I think at once that it is not "the man of uprightness and stainless integrity," but rather "the faithful lover." It is he that needs not Moorish darts nor poison-laden quiver. For such a statement appeal might be made to the particular illustration which is chosen, and for such a statement the assurance of continued love would be entirely appropriate. Now then I venture to contend that we shall not be forcing the meaning of Horace's words if we discern in them this thought of a lover's fidelity, put first positively, *integer vitae*, and then negatively, *scelerisque purus*.

*Integer* is a word of simple fundamental meaning, "untouched," "unimpaired," "whole," but its particular color and meaning ranges freely around this center and is yielded by the context in which it stands. In relation to political activity, where bribery of money or position is rife, it is "incorruptible," "uncorrupted"; in relation to friends and friendship or in the relation of soldiers to their leader or their country it is "loyal"; in relation to God it is "sinless"; in the vocabulary of love it is "faithful," that is, untouched by infidelity of deed or thought. Of examples I will cite only two: the first where a youth, Xanthias the Phocian (ii. 4, 22), is addressed and is admonished not to be ashamed of his love for the slave girl Phyllis. The poet sings her praises, and to reassure his friend that his admiration is disinterested he adds:

bracchia et vultum teretisque suras  
integer laudo—

that is "loyally, untouched by a passion which would be faithless to you." More closely parallel to our passage is the assurance to Asterie that her Gyges is still faithful in spite of temptation (iii. 7, 22):

nam scopulis surdior Icarī  
voces audit adhuc integer.

And so here, *integer vitae* is "the heart that's true," which is then followed by a negative expression of the same fidelity, *scelerisque purus*. In this latter phrase also I would discern in *scelus* a particular rather than a general meaning; for in the language of the Roman erotic poets *scelus* is almost uniformly *perfidia*, and *scelestus* (*scelesta*) is the faithless lover (or mistress). It is needless to cite examples. *Scelesta, vae te* or *audiat Lyde scelus* will occur to everyone's mind, and Pichon in his vocabulary of the erotic poets says: *scelus dicitur praecipue perfidia et fallacia*.

But let me anticipate a possible misapprehension. I do not mean to say that at once with the enunciation of the words *integer vitae*, etc., their special sphere of meaning would necessarily be recognized. The first line by itself might have seemed as universal a statement to a Roman reader as it has generally seemed to us. But with the lines that follow, *non eget Mauris iaculis neque arcu*, etc., the ancient reader must have recognized a thought which was probably current in erotic poetry long before Horace and Tibullus and Propertius gave it expression.<sup>1</sup> With this recognition, then, the words of general color which had preceded would receive a point of reference and so fall into their proper sphere of meaning. A parallel example which should, I think, show that this is quite possible may be adduced from Catullus 76:

siqua recordanti benefacta priora voluptas  
est homini, cum se cogitat esse pium,  
nec sanctam violasse fidem . . . .  
5 multa parata manent iam in longa aetate, Catulle,  
ex hoc ingrato gaudia amore tibi.

<sup>1</sup> The passage of Propertius is cited above in the quotation from Müller. The thought is expressed by Tibullus in i. 2, 29: *quisquis amore tenetur, eat tutusque sacerque qualibet*. Both passages are cited by Kiessling *ad loc.* The same thought is also alluded to by Ovid repeatedly in the *Heroides*, as e.g., Penelope 23, *sed bene consuluit casto deus aequus amori*, and Dido 57, *nec violasse fidem temptantibus aequora prodest*, etc. Cf. also Philodemus *Anth. Pal.* x. 21: Κύπρι γαληνάλῃ, φιλονόμφιε, Κύπρι δικαίων σύμμαχε.

Here the poet designates himself as *pius*, a quality which he then proceeds to define more exactly with the words *nec sanctam violasse fidem*, and not until verse 6 do we learn that the *pietas* and *fides* which he claims for himself are his devotion and fidelity to Lesbia. The passage is instructive for our Horatian ode, and might perhaps lead us to a slight modification of our previous conclusion; viz., that in both cases the poet's preoccupation with his own emotion has led him to exalt a merit or desert within the narrow orbit of his own consciousness to the rank of a universal moral quality. Thus for Horace his single-hearted devotion to Lalage becomes in the circumscribed vision of his soul the type of universal *integritas vitae*, just as for Catullus a similar fidelity to Lesbia is transformed into a universal *pietas*.

But enough of detailed interpretation. With this understanding of the opening words it will be clear that our poem is a love song of closely knit sequence, proclaiming the worth of loyal and single-hearted love, proceeding from the generalization of this theme in the first two stanzas, to the experience upon which it rests in the two following, and concluding with an assurance for the future in the last two. As for the frozen zone and the torrid sun, they are merely types of suffering and hardship which, even if they must be endured, shall not distract the poet from his love to thoughts of his own pain and danger. Lehrs and Munro have both made merry over them, but they might just as well have ridiculed the conclusion of Virgil's final eclogue, where Gallus laments that no labors which he might undergo can assuage his pain nor cause him to forget his love for the faithless Lycoris:

non illum [amorem] nostri possunt mutare labores,  
nec si frigore mediis Hebrumque bibamus, etc.,

or Burns's lines:

Though I were doomed to wander on  
Beyond the sea, beyond the sun,  
Till my last weary sand was run,  
Till then and then I love thee.

If now the emotional sequence of the ode is made clear, we are at length in a position to inquire whether as a whole it is meant as an earnest expression of the poet's feeling, or whether it is humorous, and in part or in whole mock-heroic or burlesque. Some of the reasons which have led to this last interpretation, viz., the incongruity of



beginning and close, I venture to think that I have removed. But even so the problem conceivably still remains, and you will guess from what I have already said that I would restore the poem to its old-time place as a serious lyric expression of the poet's feeling. But in such case we need not go so far as to designate its tone as one of *heiliger Ernst* with Nauck, and with the *ethos* of Flemming's music. In fact, if the opening words are the words of a lover's vocabulary, the tone of the whole will descend somewhat from the high earnestness of a univocal precept to the qualified seriousness which attaches to lovers' vows and assurances; all the world from the beginning has listened to them with sympathetic participation, to be sure, but none the less with a smile. But that is not to say that the poet is not in earnest. Following the conventions of the pastoral and idyllic poetry, not only of earlier antiquity, but of his own day, and as practiced by his own friends and intimates, Virgil and Tibullus, Horace too depicts himself in a scene of rustic primitiveness, wandering through the woodland absorbed in his love for Lalage and giving expression to it in song. It is a picture from Utopia comparable entirely to the other which he has drawn in the fourth ode of the third book, where as a child he wandered beyond the bounds of his home and was protected miraculously by the doves who covered him sleeping—*non sine dis animosus infans*. In such a scene we have no reason to urge that the peril is painted in terms of exaggeration, that the wolf in real life would have fled perhaps a little faster if Horace had used words of different import from those of his song. For the wolves that inhabit fairyland are larger and more terrible than the wolves of natural history, as any child can tell you. How otherwise shall the rescuer of Red Riding Hood appear heroic, or the deliverance of our singing lover be made miraculous?

Well, that is the sort of scenery and setting which Horace has given us here, all of a piece with the songs of the golden age which Virgil was singing, of hostile nature made harmless and even sympathetic by the power of song and love. If we yield ourselves to the scene we shall not escape the spell, but it is a kind of picture which will not bear the test of a too rationalistic questioning. The result in such case will be either to make the poet ludicrous, or else, accepting him too into the ranks of the laughers, to interpret his work as parody

and persiflage. No kind of poetry is more exposed to parody and the rationalistic jeer than poetry of a pastoral or idyllic kind. For it has only to be turned into the light of common day to provoke merriment. Virgil did not escape it in his time when in the language of pastoral simplicity he wrote *nudus ara sere nudus*, and an unknown contemporary finished his line with the highly sensible remark, *habebis frigore febrem*. As for Horace, it is doubtless true, as Smith observes, that if we approach this poem from our knowledge of the Horace of the Satires we shall scarcely be inclined to take it seriously. But why should we approach it from this avenue? Why not rather from the analogy of such a poem as the seventeenth of the first book? Here we have a pastoral idyll, in every way, except for the portentous wolf, comparable to our twenty-second. It is of course a matter of regret, in the face of such solemn assurances of fidelity to Lalage, that the girl is here quite another; but jesting aside, here is the same essential background: the shepherd's song of Tyndaris which shields his flock, and the assurance that his fidelity (*pietas*) to her and his songs in her honor give him the protection of the gods.

Both of these poems seem to me charming and delicate beyond almost anything else in Horace. But their charm rests upon a fabric of convention which cannot lightly be touched. If we turn the setting of the seventeenth into reality, and shift from the idealized pastoral landscape to the reality of our well-fed man of the world—*pinguem et nitidum*—playing the rôle of the rustic shepherd, we shall find that *dî me tuentur, dîs pietas mea et musa cordi est* was calculated to provoke a smile in the circle of his city friends quite as much as anything in the twenty-second. But I for one prefer to believe that Horace was enough of a poetical nature to submit himself to the spell of an idealized scene and conception and, rapt in this vision, to compose verses of a witchery and magic such as modern romanticism can scarcely match.

NEW HAVEN, CONN.